

Food Safety and You



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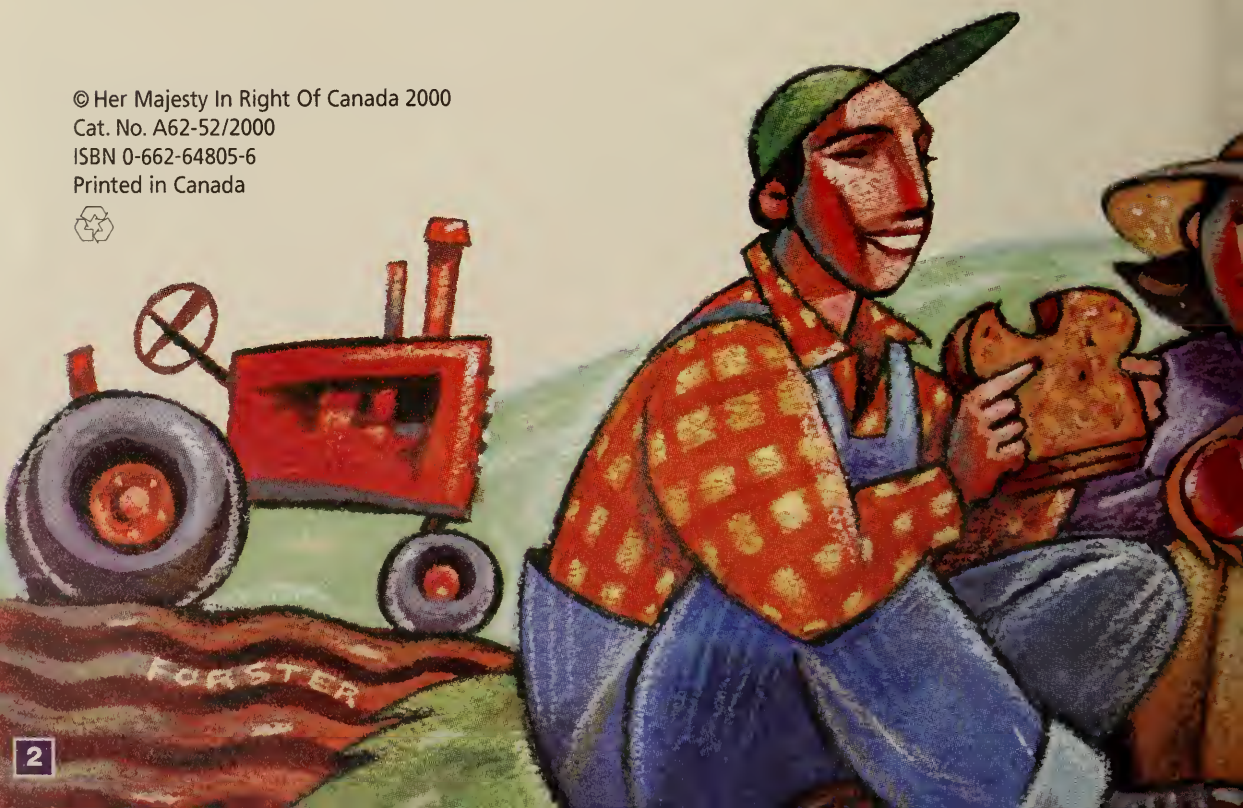
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Why is Canada's food supply one of the world's safest?

There's a good reason why the foods we eat in Canada are safe. There's a good reason why the governments of many other countries have chosen to examine Canada's food safety system to improve their own. The Government of Canada works with provinces, territories, municipalities, consumers and industry to protect our country's food supply and the health and well-being of all Canadians, from coast to coast.

We carry out this mandate through laws, regulations, inspections and product approval activities.

From the farm or the boat to the food processor, from the field or the sea right through to the family dinner table, from the greenhouse to the grocery store, there are thousands of Canadians working every day so that you and your family can be confident that the foods you eat are safe.

FOOD SAFETY TIPS



BACTERIA MULTIPLY on food that is mishandled and some of these bacteria may cause disease. Follow the food safety tips on the next pages to make sure the food you buy and prepare is safe. Examine food and its packaging at the store and again when you are ready to use it. Avoid damaged cans or packages; this may expose their contents to bacteria.



What is the Government of Canada's role in food safety?

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

STORAGE

KEEP YOUR refrigerator at 4°C (40°F) or less. Keep your freezer at -18°C (0°F) or less.

THAW FOODS in the refrigerator. Thawing in cold running water or in a microwave oven is also acceptable. Thawing at room temperature is unsafe because surface bacteria begin to multiply as soon as the surface warms.

Who oversees the feeds, the seeds and the fertilizers that our growers depend on? Who assesses the new types of vegetables, the fruits and the grains that come onto the market, to make sure they're safe for human consumption? Who inspects the meat products, the fish and seafood, and the fruits and the vegetables that we buy at our grocers? Who checks to see that the food coming into the country meets Canadian standards for safety, and that animals and plants are free of diseases and pests?

We all have a role to play in food safety—producers, processors, provincial, territorial, municipal and federal governments, retailers and consumers. Everyone contributes to the safety of the food we eat.

This brochure is about the important role that the Government of Canada plays in food safety.

Health Canada, through the *Food and Drugs Act*, is the federal department that establishes standards for the safety and nutritional quality of food sold in Canada. It is also responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) food safety inspection activities.



The CFIA inspects food produced at federally registered slaughterhouses and processing plants and carries out enforcement activities related to food. For example, if a laboratory analysis or a consumer complaint indicates that action is required, the CFIA and, depending on the situation, its federal, provincial or municipal partners will investigate the issue. Last year, the CFIA conducted thousands of investigations that resulted in the recall of about 250 products from distributors and retailers. Most of these products were removed from the marketplace because they contained undeclared allergens, bacteria or toxins that could cause foodborne illness, or contained foreign material (for example, glass particles).

Canada's provincial and territorial governments are responsible for inspecting food processing establishments that distribute products provincially and territorially. In many cases, municipalities are responsible for inspecting restaurants. These jurisdictions also play an important role in food safety.

Day in and day out, Government of Canada inspectors and scientists contribute to a rigorous and comprehensive food safety system and help maintain the high standards Canadians rely on for food safety.

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

SEAFOOD

BUY SEAFOOD from reputable sources. Clams, mussels, and oysters should be alive when they are bought. This means that their shells should be closed, or they should respond by closing when they are tapped. Use fresh seafood within three days of purchase. Look for damaged packaging, obvious mould growth, discolouration, "off odours," and texture changes.

NEVER THAW frozen seafood at room temperature. Prepare seafood quickly, cook it thoroughly, and serve it immediately. Seafood should be cooked for about four minutes per centimetre of thickness (10 minutes per inch), and should reach an internal temperature of at least 70°C (160°F) to destroy any bacteria present. Clams, mussels, and oysters should not be eaten if their shells remain closed after cooking.



Why is accurate labelling important for food safety?

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

FOOD PREPARATION

ALWAYS CLEAN your hands, utensils and cooking surfaces thoroughly. Wash your hands with soap and hot water before you handle food, repeatedly while you prepare it, and again when you've finished. Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils with a bleach solution (5mL/1 tsp. bleach per 750mL/3 cups water). This will kill surface bacteria.

PREPARE FOODS quickly, cook them thoroughly and serve them immediately. Don't let foods linger at temperatures where bacteria can grow. The "danger zone" is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F).

The Government of Canada has a number of laws in place to let you know what you're getting when you look at a label on a food product.

The *Food and Drugs Act* prohibits the labelling, packaging, treating, processing, selling or advertising of any food (at all levels of trade) in a manner that would mislead or deceive consumers as to the character, value, quantity, composition, merit or safety of the product.

The *Food and Drugs Regulations* prescribe the labelling of all prepackaged foods, including requirements for ingredient and nutrition labelling, nutrient content claims (for example, "fat free"), mandatory nutrient declarations (such as allergens) and foods for special dietary needs (such as "infant formula").

The *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* provides for a uniform method of labelling and packaging of products sold at retail. It prevents fraud and deception by providing for factual label information that allows consumers to make an informed choice. It also requires the use of metric units of measurement and bilingual labelling.



When significant nutritional changes are made to an existing food product, or when there are components in foods that may cause allergic reactions or other health concerns, the foods must be labelled as such.

The Government of Canada believes that labelling must be clear, truthful and meaningful to you. Take, for example, our support of the organic industry in its effort to develop Canada's national standard for organic agriculture. Working with the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB), a leading standards organization, a diverse group of Canadians was able to build consensus to define what is an "organic product," how it should be labelled, and how it should be produced. Through the certification and labelling of organic foods, Canadians will be able to identify which products meet these national standards.

This success has motivated us to work with consumer groups, industry and others to develop another CGSB standard. This standard is for the labelling of foods derived from biotechnology. Consistent codes of practice for labelling of foods derived from biotechnology will give consumers the information they want to make informed choices.

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

FOOD SAFETY Facts for Entertaining

REMEMBER THE "Two-Hour Rule" when entertaining with a large meal or buffet. Don't let the perishable foods linger for longer than two hours in the danger zone between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Keep hot foods hot with warming trays, chafing dishes or slow cookers that reach a temperature of at least 60°C (140°F). Keep cold foods cold by resting serving dishes on crushed ice. Serve small bowls or trays of food and replace them often. Replacement dishes should be stored in the oven or the refrigerator prior to serving. Replace buffet foods with fresh, full trays. It is unsafe to add new food to a serving dish that has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours.



How are new food products approved?

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

HOME-PREPARED VEGETABLES and Herbs Stored in Oil

THESE PRODUCTS should always be stored in the refrigerator and discarded after one week. Always use fresh ingredients to prepare products stored in oil. If receiving a gift of home-prepared food products stored in oil, check when they were prepared and discard them if more than a week old.

Over the years, scientists have been involved in developing new food technologies that could lead to improved food products. Some of these products are referred to as “novel foods,” “biotechnology-derived foods,” “genetically modified foods” or “genetically enhanced foods.”

These foods go through a rigorous and thorough review process before they can be introduced into the marketplace. The way the Government of Canada assesses and regulates these foods is based on scientific principles that have been developed through consultations with experts around the world.

Before any product derived from biotechnology can be marketed in Canada, the Government of Canada requires that it undergo thorough laboratory and field testing. This includes testing in controlled, small-scale field trials to generate some of the data needed for health and environmental safety assessments. In every step of the way, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency conducts environmental safety assessments for plants derived through biotechnology. These assessments include consideration of the



potential for the new plant to become a weed, the potential for gene-flow to wild relatives, the potential for the new plant to become a plant pest, the potential impact on other organisms in the environment and the potential impact on biodiversity. Biotechnology-derived foods must be shown to be as safe as foods already on the Canadian marketplace that have a long history of safe use.

Health Canada has a strict process for evaluating new foods developed through biotechnology. A thorough safety assessment must be carried out before they can be sold in grocery stores or in the marketplace. Teams of scientists first make sure that the new food basically corresponds to its traditional counterpart. They then do a detailed assessment of the new component introduced to the food through biotechnology.

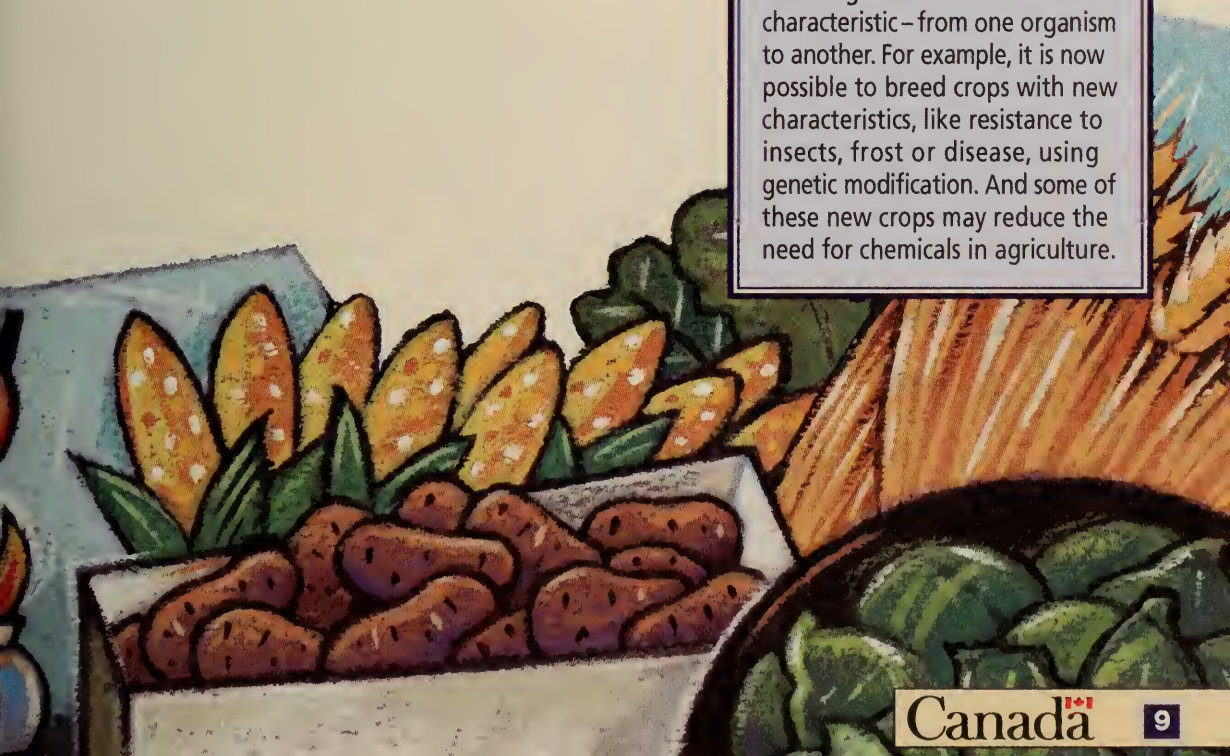
Evaluations are carried out by experts in nutrition, molecular biology, chemistry, toxicology and environmental science. In addition to looking at how the food was developed and how its composition and nutritional quality compares to traditional counterpart foods, they also scrutinize what potential the food has for being toxic or causing allergic reactions.

WHAT ARE "FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY"?

SIMPLY PUT, biotechnology is the use of living organisms, or their parts, to produce new products. If you've ever eaten bread or cheese, or used antibiotics, then you've ingested something that was produced through biotechnology.

MANY TRADITIONAL food-making processes depend on living organisms. Yeast is used to make bread rise. Bacteria is used to "age" cheese. Scientists harness natural processes of biotechnology like fermentation to produce some medicines. Antibiotics, for example, are manufactured from substances such as bacteria and fungi.

TODAY, SCIENTISTS are refining these methods so that the results are controlled and specific. Through biotechnology, they are able to move a gene – a code inside each organism that defines a characteristic – from one organism to another. For example, it is now possible to breed crops with new characteristics, like resistance to insects, frost or disease, using genetic modification. And some of these new crops may reduce the need for chemicals in agriculture.





HELPING CONSUMERS

Fight BAC!™

The Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education

YOU CAN reduce the risk of foodborne illness by following these four simple steps:

CLEAN. Wash hands, utensils and surfaces with hot soapy water before, during and after preparing foods. Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils with a mild bleach and water solution. Wash all produce thoroughly before eating or cooking.

SEPARATE. Keep raw meats and poultry away from other foods during storage and preparation. Keep separate cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables. Always keep foods covered.

COOK. Cook food thoroughly—cooking times and temperatures vary for different meat and poultry. Prepare foods quickly, and serve immediately so foods don't linger at room temperatures where bacteria can grow.

CHILL. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Make sure the refrigerator is set at a temperature of 4°C (40°F), and keep the freezer at -18°C (0°F).

What can you do as a consumer?

Canadian governments and food industry partners are working together to maintain a safe food supply. However, foods, when purchased, must be safely handled, stored and cooked at home.

To provide the public with information on the safe handling of food, consumer organizations, industry associations, and municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments, through the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education, have produced an awareness campaign called *Fight BAC!™*. The campaign focuses attention on the four key food safety messages: CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK, and CHILL.



What is the Government of Canada's commitment?

The Government of Canada is committed to enhancing the safety of the foods you eat. Food safety and consumer protection are priorities.

And, protecting the safety of Canada's food supply is the result of a collective effort by producers, processors, distributors, inspectors, governments and consumers.

By continuing to take a leadership role, and through its active participation in Canada's food safety system, the Government of Canada will continue to strengthen this system and protect the health of Canadians...now, and for generations to come.

FOOD SAFETY TIPS

LEFTOVERS

VERY HOT items can be cooled at room temperature for approximately 30 minutes prior to being refrigerated. Frequent stirring accelerates the cooling at this stage. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered, shallow containers. Food will cool faster in shallow containers. Never remove a large pot of food (such as soup, stew or pasta sauce) from the stove and place it in the refrigerator. Large masses of food can take hours or days to chill properly and will provide an ideal environment for the growth of harmful bacteria. Leftovers should be eaten within four days. For frozen leftovers, ensure they are eaten within four days of being taken out of the freezer. Do not put the food back into the same container it was in and never add leftover food to fresh food.





Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Hungry for more information?

If you would like more information on how the Government of Canada maintains Canada's food safety system, please contact us at:

1800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232) TTY/TDD 1 800 465-7735

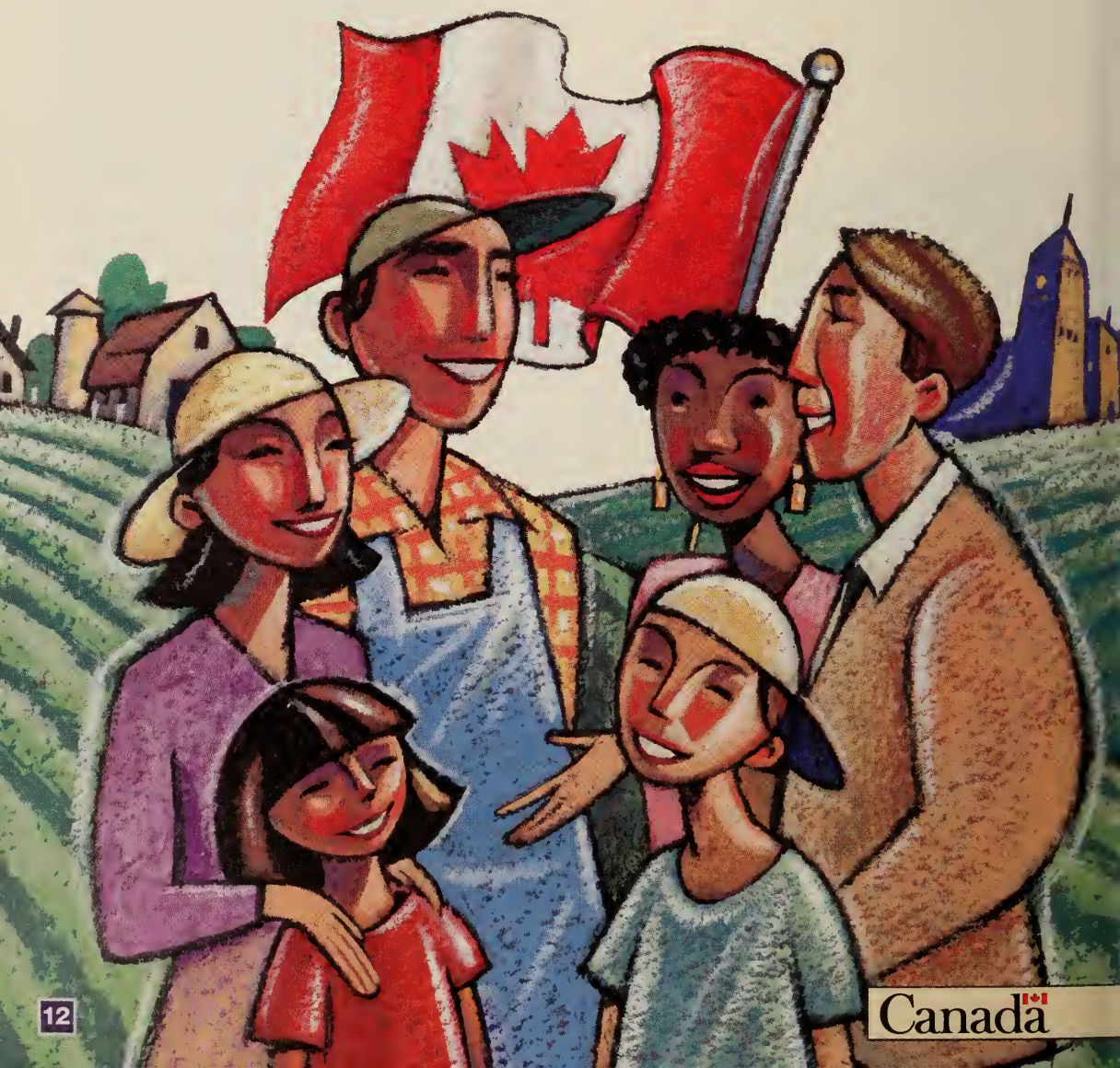
www.canada.gc.ca

Canadian Food Inspection Agency
www.cfia-acia.agr.ca

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
www.agr.ca

Health Canada
www.hc-sc.gc.ca

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Des aliments sains...chez vous!